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INDEX:

- (1) Inamine changes stance on Futenma relocation in view of reality; accepts government's plan after searching for common ground with gubernatorial race in mind
- (2) Futenma relocation; Realistic move by Okinawa Prefecture deserves praise
- (3) Editorial - Futenma relocation: Okinawa governor's anguished decision
- (4) Editorial: Governor Inamine's change welcome
- (5) Editorial - Futenma relocation: Problems facing Okinawa yet to be resolved
- (6) Suggestions to Prime Minister Koizumi: Japan should stop being a protected country

ARTICLES:

- (1) Inamine changes stance on Futenma relocation in view of reality; accepts government's plan after searching for common ground with gubernatorial race in mind

ASAHI (Page 2) (Abridged)
May 12, 2006

Reversing his previous stance of adamantly opposing the relocation of Futenma Air Station from Ginowan to Cape Henoko in

Nago, Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine has finally agreed to accept the government's plan. What prompted the governor to change his stance in the wake of Nago's acceptance of the Futenma relocation and the final agreement between Tokyo and Washington? Although the relocation plan took a step forward, many hurdles still remain.

Before signing the agreement with Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga at his agency yesterday morning, Inamine said, "Since we are going to cooperate with the central government, we would like you to understand Okinawa's position."

He could not say that he would accept the Henoko relocation plan. But given the government's final decision, all he could do was to respond to it pragmatically to extract the government's special consideration for Okinawa. That was Inamine's true intention.

A week ago, Inamine announced Okinawa's position rejecting the Henoko relocation plan. At the same time, he called for a temporary heliport.

Apparently, he had the upcoming Okinawa gubernatorial election in mind.

A senior Okinawa official noted:

"Is there any chance for a candidate supportive of the V-shaped runway plan to win the race? Change in administration in Okinawa would push the prefecture away from the Japan-US security setup."

Okinawa also attempted to find common ground with the central government.

TOKYO 00002604 002 OF 010

On May 9, Inamine's close aide held talks with Administrative Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya in Tokyo. The aide complained about a lack of steps for continued talks with Okinawa prior to a cabinet decision. This was followed by full-fledged administrative-level negotiations for drafting an agreement.

Okinawa insisted on including two factors -- elimination of risks of Futenma Air Station and continued talks -- in the envisaged agreement with the government to reflect Okinawa's standpoint.

The Defense Agency, too, engineered the expression "based on the government's plan" in an effort to elicit compromise from Inamine.

Moriya explained in a press conference yesterday that the government has avoided direct expressions, such as implementing the government's plan, to highlight Tokyo's flexible posture.

Okinawa was eager to find a settlement line with the central government for the sake of the gubernatorial election.

The Liberal Democratic Party's cooperation was essential, but the deadlocked Futenma issue was blocking the conservative camp's efforts to pick a prospective successor to Inamine. Ruling party members and business leaders in Okinawa were simmering with dissatisfaction with Inamine's lack of effort to find common ground with the government.

The Inamine aide noted yesterday, "The governor has set the base camp for the next governor and next prime minister to climb the mountain."

Government not optimistic

Prime Minister Koizumi met with Inamine at his office yesterday in which he thanked the governor for his cooperation.

It has been 10 years since Tokyo and Washington agreed to relocate Futenma Air Station, and during that period, the original Henoko offshore plan fell through. That is why the government cannot be overly optimistic.

Making a cabinet decision before the end of this month is the government's immediate goal. The government is also making coordination to include the following in the cabinet decision: (1) effective revocation of the 1999 cabinet decision on the Futenma relocation; and (2) legitimate ground for the relocation of US Marines to Guam.

Responding to Okinawa's call for economic stimulus measures is another challenge. Inamine specifically asked for the government's extra efforts for using vacated US bases and creating jobs for Japanese base workers.

US Deputy Defense Under Secretary Richard Lawless indicated that US force realignment would cost Japan 3 trillion yen. The government has yet to present even a rough estimate for the entire project, including economic stimulus packages.

Koizumi announced that the government would not submit realignment-related bills to the current Diet session. A further delay in submitting bills is bound to draw a call for a detailed

TOKYO 00002604 003 OF 010

explanation from Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) and other parties.

Whether the project would proceed in the next several years, as scheduled, is a big question.

The plan is to conduct environmental assessment over the next three years to start construction in fiscal 2009 to complete the alternative facility by 2014. The new facility cannot be build without the governor's permission to reclaim land, and that decision is likely to be made by Inamine's successor.

"Anything could happen in Okinawa," a person connected with the government said yesterday.

Secret meeting on night of May 10 to finalize agreement; Inamine

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insisted on adding SOFA-related item

Defense chief Inamine met secretly with Inamine in Tokyo on the night of May 10 to nail down their broad agreement for the following day.

They decided to include four items in the agreement.

In the following morning, Inamine called for an additional item connected with the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The SOFA falls in the jurisdiction of the Foreign Ministry. Inamine suggested writing a paragraph with the Defense Agency as the subject, but Inamine insisted on replacing the Defense Agency with the "government." As a result, Nukaga called Foreign Minister Taro Aso and obtained his concurrence.

Subsequently, Inamine and Nukaga complete the agreement including the fifth item reading "to consider measures, including improved operation of the SOFA and so on." Inamine highly evaluated the item that included "and so on" as a broad and penetrating expression.

The deadline was approaching.

On May 8, Koizumi ordered Nukaga to settle the matter for a cabinet decision before the May 26-27 Pacific Islands Summit in Okinawa.

Koizumi and Inamine are scheduled to attend the summit. The order apparently reflected Koizumi's desire to avoid exchanging verbal jabs with Inamine over the base issue on the sidelines of the summit that would bring together foreign leaders.

(2) Futenma relocation; Realistic move by Okinawa Prefecture deserves praise

Okinawa Prefecture, which had been opposed to the government plan to relocate the US forces' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City, has at long last made a realistic move.

Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine yesterday met with Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga. During the meeting, they agreed to transfer Futenma's functions, basically based on the Camp Schwab (Nago City) coastal plan as incorporated in the

TOKYO 00002604 004 OF 010

final USFJ realignment report. They then exchanged a confirmation document.

Meeting the press afterward, Inamine said that his signing the document does not mean that he had agreed to the coastal plan, but he added; "Now we have taken a step forward for an early settlement of the issue."

Though there still remain unfinished tasks, such as the implementation of the confirmation document, which listed such factors as the elimination of the danger of Futenma Air Station, the relocation issue that has damaged bilateral relations for the past decade, has moved greatly forward toward a final settlement.

It has been said that coordination of views with affected local municipalities, a factor that has hindered progress in USFJ realignment, was subject to the moves of Okinawa Prefecture. Because of this circumstance, the impact of the agreement on concerned municipalities, which had been opposed to the government plan, cannot be disregarded. If the government can share the realistic judgment made by the prefecture with those municipalities, it would strengthen the Japan-US alliance, whereby improving Japan's security environment.

The prime minister categorically told the governor, "I will implement the relocation plan in a sincere manner." The government should do its utmost in order to obtain cooperation and understanding from Okinawa residents.

It must have been agonizing for the governor to agree on the government plan, because he had taken a stance of approving only the original plan to relocate Futenma functions to offshore of Henoko.

As a result of the agreement yesterday, the Henoko offshore plan will be scrapped. However, the final USFJ realignment report has incorporated the relocation of 8,000 US Marines to Guam. Sticking to the offshore plan cannot change the situation concerning Futenma Air Station. The danger will simply increase. We give high marks to the governor's de facto policy change made in a bid to reduce the danger as well as burden on Okinawa.

However, it would have been better if he made such a realistic decision much earlier. The cabinet adopted the Henoko offshore relocation plan, based on the final report compiled by the Japan-US Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO), which the governments of Japan and the US had agreed to. However, that plan was derailed by Inamine's seeking a 15-year limit on the US' use of the base.

China is building up its military power. North Korea is engaging in a nuclear development program. A threat of international terrorism is also mounting. Japan and the US cannot protect peace and security unless they deal with those issues in cooperation. The two countries must not repeat the error of undermining their alliance ties by creating discord.

(3) Editorial - Futenma relocation: Okinawa governor's anguished decision

It must have been a painful, anguished decision for Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine.

Until just recently the governor had been opposed to the central government's plan for relocating the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station to the cape of Henoko in Nago City. But he reached agreement all of sudden with the central government on dealing with the relocation of the airfield, based on the central government's plan.

At a press conference, Inamine was asked whether he now concurs with the government's plan, to which he retorted: "Thinking that way is completely wrong." He explained: "What I have agreed on is to hold consultations on the relocation site, based on the central government's plan."

But his answer is hard to understand. Naturally, some local people are wondering whether (the governor) has actually accepted the central government's plan.

Inamine's honest feeling would be that he simply is unable to say he approves the central government's plan, nor can he oppose it.

What is felt from his wo-DzNjTQQlelocation of such facilities to somewhere outside the prefecture, the rest of Japan remains unwilling to listen to Okinawa's call.

What if Okinawa stuck to opposing the Henoko relocation plan? The Futenma airfield would remain a dangerous base in the middle of the urban area. In addition, the transferal of some 8000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam and the return of the base site in the central and southern part of the Okinawa mainland - both agreed on by the Japanese and US governments - would be put on the backburner.

Even so, for the governor, seeing the base being transferred from here to there within the prefecture is unacceptable. In addition, the Henoko relocation plan lacks the two relocation conditions the governor has insisted on: a 15-year time limit on the use of an alternative facility and a joint military and civilian use (of an alternative facility). Without them, the governor would have no means to get back the control of the facility in the hands of the Okinawa people in the future.

Following this thinking, options available to the governor were limited.

In his talks with the central government, Inamine again proposed constructing a temporary helipad on the cape of Henoko. The idea is to use it temporarily until the Futenma airfield is relocated to somewhere outside the prefecture. This proposal had already met with a rejection from the central government. But Inamine again presented it perhaps because of his desire to act to the last moment in accordance with his principles.

With the agreement this time in mind, Tokyo and Washington must believe that the relocation plan will now be implemented. But whether things will go as they expect is an open question.

The initial Henoko plan was to construct an alternative facility in waters off Henoko. This plan was later foiled by opposition

from residents and others unwilling to keep silent and endorse (the current Henoko plan or the central government's plan). Under the current Henoko plan, it may be easy to start the work of construction because it can be started on land, but when the process moves on to the stage of reclamation, the work of reclamation would face obstructions at sea.

Polls conducted in Okinawa always show that an overwhelming

majority seek to relocate the bases to somewhere outside the prefecture. In the gubernatorial election this fall following the expiration of Governor Inamine's term of office, what judgment will the Okinawa people make about the Henoko relocation plan?

The central government must not misread Inamine's anguish behind his recent decision made to reach agreement with the central government. Tokyo's failure to fully understand the pain of the Okinawa people and listen to their voices with sincerity would only lead to suffering a backlash.

(4) Editorial: Governor Inamine's change welcome

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
May 12, 2006

Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine yesterday met with Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Fukushima Nukaga. During the meeting he agreed to negotiate with the government on the Futenma Air Station relocation issue, based on the government plan to construct a heliport near the coast of Camp Schwab in Nago City. He reaffirmed this stance during a meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, as well. In reducing the burden of US military bases on Okinawa, it is important to relocate Futenma Air Station from downtown Ginowan at an early date. If the agreement marks a positive change in Mr. Inamine's policy stance, then we welcome his decision.

In 1996, Tokyo and Washington agreed to relocate Futenma functions within 5-7 years under the condition that a replacement facility be constructed within Okinawa. Then Governor Masahide Ota objected to the government plan to construct a replacement facility off Henoko, Nago City, calling for transferring such functions outside Okinawa. Inamine, who was elected in 1998, pledged to make a replacement facility off Henoko an airport for joint military-civilian use and attach a 15-year limit to its use. Since then 10 years have passed without any prospects of the construction of the facility, because the US has refused to approve the 15-year limit.

In response to mounting US dissatisfaction, Japan and the US in October 2005 reached a new agreement on a ground-based heliport plan using part of Camp Schwab and reclaimed land. The Security Consultative Committee (SCC) consisting of foreign and defense policy officials reaffirmed this plan in its final USFJ realignment report mapped out on May 1, after revising part of that agreement, complying with requests from Nago in April 2006. However, Mr. Inamine had insisted that he would maintain his old position toward the agreements between the central government and Nago, and between Japan and the US, based on this commitment to making a replacement facility an airport for joint military-civilian use.

We have called on Mr. Inamine to make a realistic decision in order to eliminate the dangers of Futenma Air Station as soon as

TOKYO 00002604 007 OF 010

possible. After exchanging the confirmation document with JDA Director General Nukaga, Mr. Inamine told reporters: "The agreement does not mean I have agreed on the government plan. It means that we will negotiate, based on this agreement." It may have been an indication that while he does not completely agree with the government plan, he will not oppose it.

A gubernatorial election is to take place in Okinawa in November. Mr. Inamine noted: "I cannot serve in the post any longer. I want to leave conservative prefectural politics to my successor." Candidates to replace him have yet to come forward. The Futenma relocation issue is bound to become a campaign issue. Coordination of views between the government and Okinawa over the Futenma relocation is expected to face some more setbacks.

(5) Editorial - Futenma relocation: Problems facing Okinawa yet to be resolved

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 5) (Full)

May 12, 2006

The central government and Okinawa Prefecture have agreed on continuing consultations on the relocation of the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station, based on the central government's plan. But the problems facing Okinawa have yet to be resolved. The central government is responsible for doing its utmost to settle remaining issues.

After the talks with Defense Agency Director-General Fukushima Nukaga, Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine stressed it was incorrect to say that Okinawa has now given the nod to the central government's plan. Nukaga and Inamine shook hands (at a press conference after their meeting), but Inamine turned his face away from Nukaga in doing so. This attitude implies his discontent with the central government for not having settled anything yet.

Inamine's position until recently was "not to accept" the central government's plan, namely, relocating the US airfield to the coastal portion of Camp Schwab. Now, however, he has reached agreement with the central government on the plan. This move can be taken as a policy change. He now aims to follow a pragmatic line of extracting as many favorable terms as possible from Tokyo in return for his acceptance of the plan, otherwise Tokyo would eventually brush aside Okinawa's objections.

But the situation is not so easy as one senior official in Tokyo elatedly stated, "We've taken this as the governor's de facto approval for our plan."

In the process of reaching an agreement, Nukaga and Inamine confirmed they would work to 1) remove the danger of the Futenma airfield, 2) ensure the safety of residents in the vicinity; 3) conserve the natural surroundings; and 4) gauge the feasibility of relocation work. Clearing all these hurdles will not be easy.

The first hurdle to clear is to remove the danger. Okinawa intends to press Tokyo for constructing a temporary helipad at the relocation site, but Tokyo is unlikely to accept Okinawa's proposal. Securing the safety of residents in the vicinity of the relocation site and protecting the marine environment would be both difficult without making changes to the central government's plan.

TOKYO 00002604 008 OF 010

Following Nukaga, Inamine met with Prime Minister Koizumi and asked him for assistance, including new legislation, as to the use of vacated land after the return of US military facilities and the employment of workers at such military facilities. The prime minister told Inamine, "The government as a whole will make every possible effort to respond to your request." The government is not allowed to make empty promises.

Most Okinawan people are still opposed to the central government's plan. If Tokyo remains reluctant to make clear the terms for the relocation, there would surely be an impact on the gubernatorial race in Okinawa set for the fall. Depending on the outcome of the election, the agreement this time between Tokyo and Okinawa would be scrapped. High-handedness by the central government would end up essentially cutting its own throat.

Each House of the Diet in its plenary session yesterday had a question-and-answer session on the final report on the US force realignment released by the Japanese and US governments.

On that occasion, when asked how he would explain to locals (about the final report), Koizumi gave only this remark: "I will continue efforts to do so with sincerity." He noted Japan will pay about 700 billion yen of the relocation cost of US troops in Japan to Guam, and that no countries other than Japan have paid such a huge amount of money, but he was unwilling to indicate any ground in specific terms for Japan's share.

On the question of Japan's total payment - estimated at 3 trillion yen - concerning the US force realignment, Koizumi only

said: "It's difficult to indicate how the cost will actually run up at this point." He did not reveal anything the public wants to know.

As it stands, even the move by the government not to submit relevant bills to the current Diet session gives the impression that it is trying to dodge Diet debates. We urge the government to fulfill its accountability; otherwise, it cannot obtain understanding from either Okinawa or the rest of Japan.

(6) Suggestions to Prime Minister Koizumi: Japan should stop being a protected country

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)
May 11, 2006

By Yoshiko Sakurai, journalist

US Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless stated on April 25 that Japan's share of the costs for the relocation of the US forces in Japan would total at least 26 billion dollars (approximately 2.28 trillion yen). I wonder what he really meant. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said, "He must have given consideration to US public opinion." I don't think Lawless made a statement that was totally different from his real intention just for domestic consumption.

It is well known that there are the two views of Japan in the United States: One is that Japan should become an independent country, abolishing the restrictions in Article 9 of the Constitution, and the other is that Japan should tenaciously hold on to the pacifist principles in Article 9.

TOKYO 00002604 009 OF 010

One person advocating for the former view has been former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, who released the Armitage

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Report in the fall of 2000. His view is that Japan-US relations should become similar to the relationship between the US and Britain, and that it is only natural for Japan to revise Article 9 so that Japan and the US will be on equal terms.

A representative of those advocating the latter view is Zbigniew Brzezinski, a scholar familiar with Japan who once served as national security advisor to President Jimmy Carter. He repeatedly wrote in one of his books, *The Grand Chessboard*, that Japan is a country protected by the United States since it entrusts its security to the Security Treaty with that country. He stressed that since it is impossible for Japan to become a major Asian power or a global superpower, it should strive to actively participate in international peacekeeping activities and assist the economic development of other countries in the future. He asserts that it would be in the best national interests of the US to urge Japan to walk this path, which will be in the national interests of the United States.

Brzezinski predicted that China would continue to grow into major power, eventually swallowing up Taiwan. It will not only become the chief power in East Asia, it also will become a world superpower.

According to his outlook, Japan will continue to be a country protected by the US, having no desire to become an independent nation. Japan will stay crouched between the US and China forever. Japan will have to pursue economic growth and return its profits to the international community. It means that the United States and the world will use Japan's funds as they did so during the Gulf War in 1991.

Such a view exists also in Japan. It stems from the thinking that Japan, reflecting its past acts of aggression as the country that caused the war in the Pacific, must not possess a military power that ordinary countries have. Japan therefore should put its energies into economic development.

This thinking lies behind the set of proposals on future Japan-China relations released on May 9 by the Japan Association of Corporate Executives (Keizai Doyukai). President Kakutaro Kitashiro told a news conference that China and South Korea's understanding of Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine can never be obtained, and that it was indispensable not to create distrust of Japan in China by further visits to the shrine.

But Prime Minister Koizumi rejected the business lobby's advice, saying, "That issue is different from politics." If I may go one step further, we also must correct the argument that Japan should be protected by the US and the view that Japan should be a handicapped country.

Various democratic countries have started disclosing much information this year marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the war. Taking advantage of some of the disclosed information, the book Mao: The Unknown Story was written by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday. The book reveals that the 1928 bombing and killing of Zhang Zuolin, the warlord of Manchuria, was the work of Russia. The book also reveals that it was not Kwantung Army, a unit of the Imperial Japanese Army, that was responsible for the 1937

TOKYO 00002604 010 OF 010

Marco Polo Bridge Incident spreading to become the Second Sino-Japanese War. It was the work of Zhang Zhizhong, a Chinese Communist Party agent, whom Zhou Enlai sent to spy on Jiang Jieshi. The book makes it clear that it was not "evil Japan" and the "evil Kwantung Army" alone that triggered the Second Sino-Japanese War and thus World War II. Therefore, Japan should not have to stay a handicapped country. The prime minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine should not evoke the distrust (of Asian countries).

The role of politicians is to assume leadership in revising such (incorrect) history and to let Japan become a normal country. If politicians can do that, Japan as a democratic state will be able to gain strength in the security area, as well. Breaking away from its dependence on the United States, Japan will be able to change the Japan-US alliance from the unilateral treaty it is now into a bilateral one.

There are signs of such a development now in Japan. However, it took more than 10 years to move ahead with a plan to relocate the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station. During that time, people wondered if Japan was really serious. They wondered if it really wanted to become independent.

That is probably why Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Lawless made his statement about the cost of realignment. He might have meant that the USFJ realignment would cost 3 trillion yen if Japan would place importance on economic development, as Brzezinski defined. The prime minister bears responsibility for making the public understand the real US intention. It is a shame that the prime minister said that Lawless had mentioned the 26 billion dollars out of consideration for the US domestic situation.

SCHIEFFER